CENTERING CARE DURING UNCERTAINTY
Virtually Supporting Student Employees and Leaders

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT
This document is intended for Oregon State University Employees who supervise, mentor or advise students. This document identifies opportunities and strategies for centering care and fostering wellness among student employees, leaders, advisees and others.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT
We hope this serves as a resource for you. We acknowledge that there is no such thing as “one size fits all,” particularly for wellness. We do not intend for this to be an exact set of rules, but rather a concise menu of strategies.

OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

- CENTER HUMANITY AND WHOLENESS
- MODEL VULNERABILITY AND AUTHENTICITY
- POSTIVITY GROUNDED IN REALITY
- LEAD WITH TRUST

- Name the uncertainty and challenge of the situation(s)
- Students recognize authentic concern, lead with authenticity
- Know that your check ins may be one of the most important places where they find connection, routine, and belonging
- Students may not be upfront with issues they are having
- Recognize that especially now, we can’t leave parts of ourselves at home, many of us are students, employees, family members and alone all in the same physical space
- Students may be hesitant to share their homes with us (via video). We can’t make assumptions about why they are or are not using their video functions in a meeting.
- Don’t make assumptions about how engaged a student is based on their video (e.g., children in the background)
INITIAL CONNECTION WITH STUDENTS

Tips to initiate your connection with a student in your first meeting or in-service training. Start by naming the context that we are in and that it is a new reality that we are all adjusting to. With that, be sure to emphasize that how this new reality plays out is different for each of us based on our circumstances.

SHARE YOUR APPROACH

- Share how your approach as a supervisor/mentor understands and respects people’s current experiences and whole selves.
- Be very specific about your expectations for connecting and/or getting work done. E.g., how do they count their hours? Do they need to maintain a specific schedule?
- Include how expectations may be different- frame the shift (especially if you have worked with these students previously)
- Model vulnerability - you can share how these changes are affecting you and practice intervulnerability (mutual vulnerability and holding space with others, we are all in a place of change and potentially anxiety and stress)

CREATING A SELF-CARE PLAN (FOR YOU AND STUDENTS!)

Offer your students resources and time to create a self care plan. This plan can be specifically about their work and taking care of themselves at work. Some kind of support or self care plan will allow you to revisit this topic throughout the year with a reference point. Make sure to take time to ask about their support system. Who are they able to reach out to when they need support? How often are they reaching out? Encourage them to connect with at least one person they care about every day, if they are able and have this be part of their plan. Here is an example template.
ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT

TEAM MEETINGS: CONNECTION BEFORE CONTENT

- Make space for students to connect casually
- Provide a check in question to get students talking and comfortable, make this a ritual
- Open or close meetings with questions that allow them to showcase things that matter to them
- Consider opening the virtual meeting room early or start off with student-only breakout rooms to designate time for casual connection

1:1 MEETINGS

- Begin by checking in with students’ well-being be sure to give space for them to answer beyond just a quick “good”
- Be sure to use active listening, validate their experiences, and affirm that you are there to support them. Ask if they have access to everything they need to be successful.
  - This includes access to basic needs: food, shelter, safety in their home, tech, etc.
  - If a student asks for resources or support, then offer to refer them, or ask them if they are interested in you helping them find additional resources
- Revisit their self-care plan- make this a regular question during check ins
- Communicate any changes in expectations of work or procedures. Ask for their feedback, if their feedback is able to be incorporated. Be transparent about what policies are flexible vs. which ones are more directive.
- Even if things seem the same, regularly ask them if they feel their workload is manageable
- If they are struggling to be productive and meet deadlines, start by asking them if they are ok, before creating a plan for productivity

NORMALIZE ASKING FOR HELP. OFFER STUDENTS EXAMPLE LANGUAGE TO REDUCE ANXIETY OF ASKING FOR HELP OR ACCOMMODATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, “YOU CAN ALWAYS MESSAGE ME TO SAY, ‘CAN WE TALK ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE GOING?’ AND THAT CAN ALWAYS START OFF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN US.”

CHECK IN PROMPTS

Happies and crappies, brags and drags, what food do you dislike the most, what song is giving you life right now, what is something you are looking forward to?
RESOURCES

AT OSU

OSU COVID-19 Safety & Success Website: Official OSU website with policies, updates and resources.

Kognito, a specialized training to support students in distress. There are two learning modules, one for staff and faculty and another for peer-to-peer interactions. Click here for the staff module.

Familiarize yourself with OSU resources that may be beneficial for struggling students on the OSU Experience website.

Download the CARE folder, an online document intended to provide you with resources and referral information to assist you as you support students.

Human Services Resource Center- Numerous resources to support students in financial stress, including textbook support, laptop loans and food assistance.

OSU Library Services: The Library has shifted many of its in person functions to support access for students and staff.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Compiled resources on supporting learning and well-being during COVID by The Greater Good Science Center

Connecting with Students: A Collection of Practices from the Greater Good Science Center

Remote & Virtual Learning and Program Delivery Resources
- Tips for Successful Virtual Facilitation from Training Wheels
- Virtual Team Building Games by Michelle Cummings/Training Wheels
- More Virtual Team Building Activities by Michelle Cummings/Training Wheels
- Zoom-Friendly Warmups and Icebreakers

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